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ATG Interviews Dan Halloran

Katina Strauch

Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

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Into the Twenty-first Century: from page 54

We spent the whole of the twentieth century building major collections and building major systems to organize those collections and make them available. And, I think, in the foreseeable future, we've got to concentrate on being more precise about methods for searching and understanding more precisely the characteristics of the people that we want to serve.

Right now, most librarians get very little training in that. The ones that do are the children's librarians, who understand precisely the needs of a four-year-old (as distinct from the needs of a seven- or eight-year-old) and who apply that knowledge daily to match those kids with the kind of information that will be useful to them and also consistent with their needs and interests. People who serve adults and undergraduates don't get that kind of training, so mostly it's a hit-or-miss thing for us. So we can do a better job of matching their information needs and interests with what is available to them.

You asked me what I thought the future was

going to be like... I think the future is going to be pretty much like what the past has been, with a continuing emphasis on these technological systems, and more and more emphasis on the Internet.

VB: Can you comment on the impact of globalization?

RW: That's hard to predict, because that's going to be primarily subject to economics and politics. Access to information will continue to improve, more slowly in some societies than in others — especially in societies where you have religion as a controlling factor, where the object there is not to give people access to lots of information but to control what people think.


VB: Your career has been meteoric, and it's still going strong! Would you like to offer any advice to librarians just beginning their careers?

RW: My advice to young librarians is to get to be knowledgeable, get involved, and write for publication. Pursue the topics that are of interest to you, research them, and write about them.

VB: Thank you! This has been very inspiring...

RW: Thank you for calling.

VB: ...and I appreciate it.

RW: It's been a pleasure. Good luck to you. 

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ATG Interviews Daniel P. Halloran

(President, Blackwells Book Services, Inc.) <Dan.Halloran@Blackwell.com>

by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

ATG: Give us specifics about the sale of Everett's to Blackwell's. These are two companies with a long history in the book and serials business. How will organizational structure, personnel, and services change?

DPH: Colin Harrison from Everett's and I have worked together for almost ten years. It started out as a strategic relationship when I owned Academic Book Center and developed into a personal as well as professional relationship over the years. Colin and I kept in contact even after my move to Blackwell's. So it was no surprise when Colin approached me earlier this year with the idea of Blackwell's purchasing the bookselling operations of Everett's.

Colin represented not just his own interest but that of the other shareholders and they asked several booksellers to bid. Although Blackwell's bid was not the highest, Colin felt that Blackwell's would retain the largest amount of business and continue with the high standards he and the Everett's staff had developed. We feel honored to be chosen to carry on the proud Everett's tradition and will do everything possible to maintain that reputation.

The operations have been successfully consolidated into our operations in Oxford. Colin will work with us for the next year to insure that all goes as smoothly as possible and that we fully understand the details of each customer. Colin will also be joining us in San Diego for the ALA meeting.

A limited number of staff, primarily from the Everett's exhibition business, Granta, have moved to Blackwell's.

ATG: We understand that Academic Book Center will be totally absorbed by Blackwell's as of January 1, 2004. What does this mean exactly? Will there be no office in Portland?

DPH: When I sold Academic to Blackwell's in April 1999 I promised the Academic customers that I would not merge the two companies until BBS could deliver the same or better service than they had from Academic. Over the past several years we have worked hard to make that promise possible and we have finally achieved it. In addition, Blackwell's has the resources to provide not just excellent bookselling but all the ancillary services libraries require, i.e., comprehensive on-line services, advanced connectivity with library ILS systems, etc. Blackwell's is committed to libraries in a way that will insure that money is available for continuing development and upgrading of systems and services.

All book distribution will be shifted to Blackwell's two distribution centers, Blackwood, NJ and Oxford. About 25 AcBC employees will be employed by Blackwell's in addition to the 10 or 15 others who have transferred in the last several years. Blackwell's is fortunate to be able to retain these employees and their decades of library and bookselling knowledge. It means that Blackwell's will have access to the specific knowledge about the individual needs of these customers making the transition much easier for the libraries.

Blackwell's will be 125 years old in January 2004 and, more impressive, is still in the hands of the founding family. The Blackwell's

are firmly committed to libraries and have been for a very long time.

ATG: What relation, if any, does this have to the purchase of Everett's?

DPH: Actually none. We have been planning the Academic merger for quite some time. It just so happened that Everett's became available at the same time.

There is one common element and that is that smaller booksellers are being squeezed by the need to provide higher discounts to libraries, getting lower discounts from publishers, and the need to invest heavily in IT. When Barry Fast and I decided to sell five years ago we saw these trends emerging and now we are seeing other booksellers experiencing the same trends. In the UK there are more small booksellers seeking partners and I think this trend will continue.

ATG: What is Blackwell's long term plan for the book business? In what new areas will you be expanding? What new marketing techniques will you use?

DPH: Blackwell's long term plan for the book business is determined by the larger forces affecting libraries. These forces include a difficult financial environment, demands to purchase information in new formats, library users expectations for instantaneous access to everything, and fewer resources. "Doing more with less" will be with us for a long time.

For Blackwell's to remain relevant we must add new services and features that help libraries work more efficiently in this environment. Not only do we need to provide excellent

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ATG Interviews Bob Schatz

(Director, Sales and Marketing, Franklin Book Company, Inc.)

by Jack G. Montgomery (Column Editor, *ATG*, Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

ATG: Bob, how did you come to work with Franklin Book Company?

BS: The short answer is that the planets all came into alignment to provide a great opportunity for me to help direct a great company. The longer answer is that I've been aware of **Franklin** for some time, through my acquaintance with **Manny Deckter**, the company's President, and a long-standing friendship with **Linda Moran**, **FBC's** Director of Customer Relations. For some time I've been tracking the success of this rather remarkable domestic bookseller, so the lines of communication were already open.

ATG: Can you tell us a little bit about the company's history, its founder and Franklin's overall business philosophy?

BS: The company began in 1969, primarily serving special libraries in the Philadelphia/New York area. This is a great place from which to begin, because of the demands placed on vendors by special libraries. **Franklin** is used to meeting some rather exceptional requirements in terms of turnaround time, so we were ideally suited to meet the needs of academic libraries when we expanded our customer base. **Manny Deckter** acquired the company twenty years ago. His multi-faceted philosophy of business is still very much the guiding force within the company, and was what attracted me when we discussed the possibility of my joining **Franklin Book**:

- Pay attention to every detail; they are all important to both our customers and to Franklin.

- Listen to what the customer needs, and look for ways to say "yes" before you jump to "no."
- Never forget we're booksellers to libraries, not merchandisers; we don't "move units," we sell books. Learn the craft of bookselling. Know what goes on in publishing. Pay attention to the particular needs of libraries.

ATG: What, if any, specialized training, experience or education did you receive before getting into the book business?

BS: Now, that could turn into a very long story, but I'll spare you most of the details. I came out of Library School (U of Oregon, class of December 1976) with \$14 in my bank account. My first job with my new MLS was shelling tacos in a fast-food place in Eugene for minimum wage. Later I went back into retail bookselling, supplemented by waiting tables and doing some freelance advertising writing. I eventually went to **Academic Book Center** to see if they had any leads on library jobs, and ended up spending the next twenty years within that organization, where I eventually became VP for Sales. The library degree and all those years of retail and wholesale bookselling became the foundation for my work now as **Franklin's** Director of Sales & Marketing.

ATG: Who do you see as primary customers of Franklin Books? Are you organized to respond to a certain patron group?

BS: While special libraries are still important to the company (we have the IBM book contract, for instance), academic libraries have

become our largest customer group. We've established the same service options as the big companies, and internally we're organized primarily by those service areas: firm orders, standing orders, approval plans. There are other departments that cross service lines: automation/Web-support, accounting, sales. In most cases, customer service is handled within the specific service areas, so customers can talk directly with those most likely to have access to information that will quickly, and correctly, solve problems that arise.

ATG: So far, what has been notable in your experience in dealing with libraries? Have there been any unexpected issues?

BS: We've always been aware of the complexity that surrounds library book-buying needs. The issue for us today, and the one that is creating tremendous opportunities for **Franklin Book Company**, is the extent to which libraries today feel that service quality from booksellers is eroding. That keeps us focused on developing new services (our approval plan, for instance, was created three years ago), and on constantly looking for ways to improve existing services. Even though we have a minuscule market share compared to companies like **Blackwell's** and **Yankee Book Peddler**, there's still plenty of unmet demand among the libraries we serve. Our biggest challenge now is keeping up with our own growth. In a very depressed market, we have a great deal of optimism about the future of the company, though we have no illusions that the industry as a whole will likely not be a cheery environment in the coming years.

ATG: From a vendor's standpoint, what is one thing you wish most librarians knew but sometimes seem to forget or need to learn?

BS: Those of us in the commercial side who conduct ourselves professionally really are colleagues and deserve the same respect as fellow librarians. I think too many librarians still see us either as a necessary evil, or not worthy of much consideration and it's frustrating. Some of us in bookselling, I think, really want to be of assistance, and to be part of a larger library environment that provides knowledge to society. From my vantage point in sales, I see struggles all the time just to get appointments, let alone the opportunity to find and create positive synergies. Sometimes that frustrates me.

ATG: Do you find it difficult to compete with large companies/vendors?

BS: If anything, the opposite is true. For all the value that large companies promote to libraries, they don't necessarily provide levels of service that meet all needs. There are a great many libraries of all sizes, from **ARL** to very small college libraries, that are looking for better options, which creates opportunities for companies like **Franklin Book Co., Inc.** What pleases me, as Director of Sales & Marketing

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bookselling services but also integrate our selection, acquisitions, and shelf-ready processing services into the workflows of libraries. This integration must help libraries reduce their costs while getting the material into the hands of users faster.

Much of our development is focused on these issues. And that is not just IT related development but people development as well. We need people who thoroughly understand how libraries operate and can talk intelligently about how to integrate tools that aid selection, acquisitions, etc. Setting up workflows and integrating those into the various computer systems is a key element of success now.

Once we have established efficient ways for libraries to select and acquire material we can further improve library cost reductions by making more things available including non-English language material, non-book material, and electronic information.

To tie this all back to the **Everett's** and **Academic** situation, you can see that this requires significant resources. It will be harder for smaller companies to finance and provide these services in the future.

ATG: Dan, you have been with Blackwell's a good while. How will these changes affect our role in Blackwell's?

DPH: First, I have never had more fun nor worked as hard as I have for the last five years. I started in this business with **Richard Abel** many years ago. Having the opportunity to come back to this company after so many years and help prepare it for the future is a great deal of fun. **Blackwell's** has the resources, people, capital, systems, and the commitment that allows me to be creative and challenged.

I serve as the President and CEO of **Blackwell's Book Services** as well as a member of the **Blackwell, Ltd. Board of Directors**. I am involved in strategy at the highest levels of the book business, not just libraries, but retailing and a bit of publishing.

The recent changes will only make the job more challenging and FUN! 